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EAST TIMOR AND SELF-DETERMINATION

BY WILLIAM F. FELICE

Statement to the Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations

August 13, 1987

Distinguished Chair and Delegates,

The International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples protests the continual denial of the right to self-determination for the people of East Timor. Indonesia's illegal occupation of East Timor in 1975 violates the human rights provisions in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Racial Discrimination Convention; as well as the provisions of the two Covenants that make up the International Bill of Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The International League, numerous NGO's and diplomats have presented documentation proving Indonesia's actions in East Timor to be crimes of genocide as defined in the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Nothing else can explain the deaths of 100,000 to 200,000 East Timorese, representing 10 to 20 percent of the territory's population.

The International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples was denied access to visit East Timor this year to inspect the current situation. Four other international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, were also refused entrance. This denial came despite the personal assurance given by the Indonesian Ambassador in Paris and London that independent observors would be allowed to investigate the country.

Self-Determination

In 1960, the General Assembly adopted the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" (Resolution 1514). Combined with Resolution 1541, the United Nations recognized the right of self-determination of peoples. These resolutions called for the speedy decolonization of the non-self-governing territories. Included on the list of countries it considered "non-self-governing" under Portuguese administration was Timor. Thus in the 60's and early 70's, East Timor's right to self-determination was officially recognized by the General Assembly. Indonesia made no objection and raised no territorial claim.

The General Assembly established the Committee of 24 to implement resolutions 1514 and 1541 and report on the progress toward self-determination of colonized territories and peoples. Certain explicit ground rules were established by the U.N. for

the implementation of self determination. Involvement of the United Nations in all stages of the process was considered critical. For example, one of the functions of the Committee of 24 was to supervise:

> ...the self-determination process in non-self-governing territories, particularly in those situations where the people are being asked to decide on a constitutional formula falling short of independence or where concern has been voiced regarding the full respect for democratic processes during the electoral consultation.

Indonesia ignored these rules of international law with its invasion and continued domination of the country of East Timor.

The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution following the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor "deploring" the invasion and calling upon Indonesia to "withdraw all its forces without delay from the Territory." Indonesia to this day ignores this demand.

The role of the United States in these events must in particular be pointed out. Indonisia relied almost entirely on U.S. arms granted on the explicit condition that they were to be used only for self defense. And, as Noam Chomsky has pointed out, "the invasion continued, through 1983 and until today, thanks to an increasing arms flow from the United States designed to facilitate the aggression and subsequent slaughter." The United States participated in the slaughter with enthusiasm. Contrary to its proclaimed six-month arms moratorium, during this period arms continued to flow and the U.S. even made new offers of equipment particularly useful for counterinsurgency operations. By 1977, Indonesia had actually begun to exhaust its military supplies in this war against a country of 700,000 people. The U.S. arranged a large-scale increase in the flow of arms to Indonesia, in the certain knowledge that they would be used in the genocide being waged in East Timor. Arms trade to Indonesia by the U.S. was conducted in the same manner that arms trade last year was done by the U.S. with Iran--secretly and against stated U.S. policy.

The U.S. government also lent diplomatic support to the Indonesian invasion. UN Ambassador Daniel Moynihan in a secret cable of January 23, 1976 to Secretary of State Kissinger cited his success in blocking UN action on Timor as part of the "considerable progress" he had achieved by arm-twisting tactics at the U.N. In his memoirs, he explains why the UN was unable to act in a meaningful way:

> The U.S. wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the U.N. prove utterly ineffective in whatever measure it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.

For the invasion to succeed, it was imperitive that there be no public outcry in the West--silence was crucial. If no one was aware of what was happening, there would be no impediment to the ongoing slaughter. News of Timor disappeared from the press and the U.S. hid its participation.

In East Timor itself, Indonesia staged an illegitimate and packed "People's Assembly" which (to no ones surprise) voted unanimously for integration with Indonesia. There was no international monitoring of this assembly and the United Nations was not involved in any way. Indonesia then announced that the people of East Timor had excercised their right to self determination. After the reign of terror that has been established through the deaths of 100,00 to 200,000 people, it is no exaggeration to say that the people of East Timor have no more excercised their right to self determination than the people of Poland did after the Nazi invasion.

Thank you.

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